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REMARKS BY
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CYRUS R. VANCE
BEFORE THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ORDNANCE ASSOCIATION
SHERATON JEFFERSON HOTEL, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1965 -- 8:00 P.M. (CDT) - 7:00 P.M. (EDT)

I deeply appreciate this opportunity to speak before a group so concerned as you are with the security of America, and so directly involved in the preservation of its strength and freedom.

Tonight, I want to speak of Vietnam.

On April 7th, you heard the President address this subject at Johns Hopkins University. He explained, on that occasion, why we are in Vietnam.

We are there to honor a long-standing pledge to the independent people of that land.

We are there to strengthen world order and the faith of free people everywhere in our commitment to their stability, their security, and their independence.

We are there because we have learned that aggression, unmet anywhere, opens the gate to aggression everywhere.

And we are there -- not just with soldiers, sailors and airmen, but also with doctors, scientists and teachers -- to lend a hand as the brave Vietnamese people climb the hill to a broader vision of a peaceful, more abundant tomorrow.

The President made it unmistakably clear that we will remain in South Vietnam as long as we are needed:

"We will not be defeated. We will not grow tired. We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement."

At the same time, while maintaining our full commitments to Vietnamese independence, we remain ready for unconditional discussions. And we look forward to joining with all the nations of Southeast Asia in a great, cooperative effort to develop that region for the welfare of all.

In the wake of the eloquent speech at Baltimore, it is clear that there is now far greater understanding of the conflict in Vietnam. But there are still some who will not heed the facts.

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Here and in other lands, some still question the nature of the aggression we oppose, the identity of the aggressor, and the role we are playing. Let me set forth some of these questions, and let me answer them with truths which cannot be denied.

Some say that this is just a rebellion, inevitable and probably justified, and they ask: What evidence is there that the war in South Vietnam is a creature of the communists, controlled and supported from the north?

The evidence is overwhelming that this is not an indigenous rebellion but a war, directed, controlled and supported from Hanoi.

We know, first of all, how the North Vietnamese have organized to control the war in the south. Within the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party -- the Communist Party led by Ho Chi Minh -- there was once a "Committee for Supervision of the South" which has now become the so-called Reunification Department. This agency issues political policy directives to the Central Office for South Vietnam, located in Tay Ninh Province to the northwest of Saigon.

In the south, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam is the screen behind which the communists operate. It is worth noting that Hanoi demanded establishment of such a "front" three months before its formation was actually announced in December 1960. It is also worth noting that the Front's representatives, when travelling abroad, do so with North Vietnamese passports and sponsorship.

Closely paralleling and coordinated with the political effort, the military affairs of the Viet Cong are controlled by the North Vietnamese Ministry of Defense, through the military section of the Viet Cong Central Office. Other agencies in Hanoi exist specifically to execute policy in the south, to control clandestine intelligence operations there, and to influence world opinion in favor of the so-called "National Front for Liberation..."

We know of this apparatus, and the constant policy and operational control which it exercises over the Viet Cong:

- By interrogation of prisoners.
- By capture of many documents.
- And by various intelligence sources.

We know, too, the historical pattern of communist expansion -- a basic ideology, centralized control, a direct relationship between communist forces in every land, and a professed intention to impose the communist system on all countries. We see direct reflection of this in documents

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such as the one found on the body of a Viet Cong soldier in Ban Me Thuot as long ago as August 1961. To quote it:

"In implementation of the decision of the Third Congress of the Lao Dong Party (the North Vietnamese Communist Party), the N.F.L.S.V. (the 'National Front') was set up to unify the revolutionary struggle, to over-throw the U.S.-Diem regime, to establish a popular government of democratic union and bring about the peaceful reunification of the country. The revolution for the liberation of the South would never succeed if the Party (i.e. the Lao Dong Party) were not directing it."

There is also evidence in the cells of activists which were left behind at the time of partition to prepare clandestinely for future operations, while others were taken north to be trained and then returned for insurgency.

We hear and read the constant propaganda broadcasts and leaflets from Communist China, Hanoi, and the Viet Cong "front" in South Vietnam. Their matching tones, aims, and even words are much more than coincidence.

The Buddhists identified the source of their nation's problems in a communique, issued two weeks ago, which closed with the prayer that "the country and religion ... be freed soon from the control and oppression of Communists."

There is evidence in the unanimous testimony of every South Vietnamese leader since partition -- Buddhist, Catholic, military, civilian. No matter their differences, none has shown sympathy for the Viet Cong. None has called this a civil war. All have agreed that the Viet Cong movement in South Vietnam is the aggressive creation of Hanoi, and subject to its direct control.

Finally, as the most tangible evidence of direct Hanoi support, there are the men, weapons, and supplies infiltrated from the north to the south.

We know of the two Xuan Mai camps, near Hanoi, major training bases for the large infiltration groups which are sent for guerrilla operations in both South Vietnam and Laos. We know of other camps and staging areas -- at Vu Con, Dong Hoi, Vit Thu Lu, and many other places. We have identified at least one major element -- the 70th Transportation Group -- which exists solely to move infiltrators from north to south. We have identified another unit specially organized for sea infiltration.

But, people ask, aren't the infiltrators just a trickle, a tiny flow of symbolic sympathy for the rebels in the south?

We have calculated the number of infiltrators carefully, keeping our estimates intentionally conservative. No man is counted unless his presence has been established by at least two Viet Cong prisoners, two Viet Cong documents, or one of each. Still the figures are impressive, revealing a river rather than a trickle, a conscious, mounting effort to destroy South Vietnam with a flow of trained, indoctrinated, hard-core

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guerrilla fighters and terrorists -- 39,517 since 1959 -- and that total is unquestionably low.

Our best estimate is that the infiltrated manpower from North Vietnam -- after allowances for casualties at the over-all Viet Cong rate of roughly 15 percent per year -- represents a majority, and certainly the key leadership and technical skill, of the hard-core Viet Cong.

Another point of significance is the marked rise we now see in the percentage of infiltrators who are inhabitants of North Vietnam, most of whom have never seen the south. In earlier days, most of the infiltrators were South Vietnamese, trained in the north by the communists, and then returned south for subversion. But we now estimate that, in 1964, some 6,000 of the infiltrators -- 75 percent -- were North Vietnamese, with no shred of a reason to move south except to wage war.

Other people, perhaps granting the evidence of infiltration, ask about the arms which the Viet Cong use. Isn't it true, they ask, that most of the Viet Cong weapons have simply been taken from government forces, clear evidence that there is no real will to resist this uprising in the south?

The answer is no; that is not true. The great bulk of the Viet Cong weapons -- certainly 60-70 percent, including nearly all of the heavier and more modern ones -- come from external communist sources.

It is true that the Viet Cong use weapons cached in 1954. It is also true that the South Vietnamese, from 1961 until today, have lost 39,000 weapons, but in the same period the Viet Cong lost 25,000, and so the Viet Cong gains have netted them only some 14,000 arms. This is only 10-15 percent of their total requirements or, most favorably, only 30 percent of the requirements for their regular, "main force" units alone. The remainder -- some 35,000 weapons for the regular, "main force" Viet Cong troops, and between 50,000 and 100,000 for the Viet Cong irregulars -- must, and have, come from outside.

Related to this, it is heartening to observe the trend in weapons losses in 1965. For a long while, the ratio of losses was 3 to 1 in favor of the Viet Cong. But this year the ratio is 1 to 1 -- a favorable sign.

Thousands of Communist Bloc weapons already have been captured this year, in every Corps area in South Vietnam. As an example, in a recent major action in Chuong Thien Province, Government forces fought two units of Viet Cong -- the 96th Battalion, and a Guard Battalion of Military Region 9. In this encounter, 90 percent of the small arms, and 100 percent of the larger weapons captured by Government forces were of Communist Bloc manufacture. These included, for example, 20 Soviet 7.62mm rifles; 52 Chinese Communist 7.62mm carbines; 4 Chinese Communist RPD 7.62 mm machine guns; and a number of Czech arms.

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The trend in capture of 7.62 mm weapons and ammunition is now becoming significant. This is materiel not used in Vietnam by either the South Vietnamese or by us. It is materiel which can only come from out-of-country sources, and that which we have found has all been manufactured in Communist Bloc countries. From many provinces comes increasing evidence that all main and local Viet Cong forces are being equipped with 7.62 mm arms: One example is the action I have just mentioned in Chuong Thien. The large vessel sunk along the South Vietnamese coast in February contained 500,000 rounds of 7.62 ammunition along with sixty 7.62 mm weapons. In the week of 10-17 April, 750,000 rounds of 7.62 ammunition were captured in Phu Yen. In Dinh Tuong, also in April, 174,000 more rounds of this ammunition were taken.

Prisoners have confirmed beyond doubt the arming of Viet Cong units with this new materiel. As of now we believe that 6 battalions are so equipped -- Battalion J-108 of the C-58 Regiment; the 801st Battalion; a North Vietnamese Army battalion which I shall mention in a moment; the 303d Battalion; the 96th Battalion; and the Guard Battalion at An Xuyen. In addition, 17 other battalions are thought to have 7.62 weapons already.

As if all this were not sufficient, proof has now come to us of one more clear link in the chain of aggression which extends from Hanoi to the home villages of the south. We can now confirm that a combat unit of the regular North Vietnamese Army -- the 2d Battalion, 101st Regiment, of the 325th Division -- has secretly entered South Vietnam and is located in northwest Kontum Province. There may also be other elements of this division in this area.

We have had previous indications of this from various intelligence sources. We were also alerted, in an encounter on 29-30 March between the Government's 21st Ranger Battalion and this force. At that time it was clear that the South Vietnamese forces had met a professional enemy unit -- disciplined, skilled, aggressive, and more heavily armed than other Viet Cong units. And we have confirmed this identification by extensive interrogation of a prisoner taken from this regular, North Vietnamese battalion.

So when people ask ... Is there proof of external control and support? If it exists, isn't it minor? Or, isn't this a genuine civil uprising rather than aggression? ... I point to all this evidence and, in turn, I ask these questions:

Who are the leaders of this "native rebellion," if rebellion it is? Why -- until the last few days -- the total anonymity in this so-called "revolution"? Why do northern communist names come first to your mind -- Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap?

If 39,000 armed South Koreans were to penetrate North Korea and wage a war directed by Seoul, what would the Chinese Communists call this -- a popular rebellion, or aggression?

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If 39,000 armed West Germans were to penetrate East Germany and wage a war directed by Bonn, what would the Soviets call this -- a popular rebellion, or aggression?

If, still, it is maintained that this is a "civil war," with the people rising up against an unpopular government, recall these facts:

-- At the time of partition, 900,000 Vietnamese refugees freely chose to leave the communist north for South Vietnam.

-- In recent months, some 200,000 more have fled from their homes in Viet Cong-controlled areas of South Vietnam to seek the protection of the Government.

-- At no time in the war, at its terrible worst, has any significant refugee group of this sort fled from Government areas to Viet Cong areas or to North Vietnam.

-- No single responsible leader, no major interest group or party in South Vietnam, has ever shown sympathy or support for the Viet Cong.

-- No great, popular revolutionary figure has arisen from the faceless Viet Cong. And no local Viet Cong leader has been able to maintain control without the use of force, terror, and the constant threat of death for any opponent.

-- More than 50,000 soldiers of South Vietnam have been killed or wounded in battle for their country since 1960. Last year alone, the South Vietnamese Army suffered 25 percent more battle casualties, proportionately, than we incurred in the entire 3 years of the Korean War. And still they fight on. Is this a nation with no will to resist?

No, this is a nation which will resist -- not only in its armed forces but also in its civilian populace where, despite the terror and the murder, there are always new leaders ready to take over in the villages for those who have been assassinated. This is a nation which is strongly resisting, not a popular uprising but a calculated, brutal, and bloody aggression from without. The South Vietnamese are not deluded about this. At every hand, they have evidence of what rule by the Hanoi-controlled Viet Cong would mean. In the Vietnamese villages and countryside -- where people ask no more than the freedom to live, work and bring up their children in peace -- assassinations, bombings, kidnappings, armed assaults, and sabotage have become the tragic way of life.

-- In 1960, communist terrorist assassinated or kidnapped over 3,000 South Vietnamese. Death came by knife; by pistol shots in homes in the middle of the night; by snipers' bullets in the fields; by bombs; by savage beatings; and by protracted, ruthless torture. And those who were kidnapped were seldom seen again.

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-- Since 1962, more than 3500 separate acts of terrorism, armed attack, and sabotage have occurred, affecting tens of thousands of individual South Vietnamese.

-- In 1964, 436 local officials were murdered; over 1100 other officials were taken by kidnapping to an unknown fate; 1359 other civilians were murdered; and another 8400 were kidnapped by the Viet Cong. Over 11,000 innocent humans in all -- murdered or dragged away from their families and homes to captivity, forced labor, and much worse. In America, in proportionate terms, this would have meant 143,000 of our citizens slain or kidnapped in 1964 alone.

This bleeding and intimidation of the people and the local governmental structure in South Vietnam have gone on for eight years. They go on today -- against the women and children as well as the men -- for what more effective way is there to dominate a populace than to kill its leaders and trained officials, to threaten the women with horror, and to kill the children of those who oppose the aggressors.

This is the nature of the aggression and of the aggressor in South Vietnam today. This is what the Vietnamese face and why they fight. And this is why we have pledged to help them.

Yet people ask -- even Americans -- how can we justify the use of our military power in South and, particularly, North Vietnam?

We can justify it in South Vietnam because a sovereign and independent nation has asked our help in advising, supplying and supporting its forces as they resist armed aggression and terror from without.

We can justify it in North Vietnam because, as all the evidence shows, and as President Johnson has said, Hanoi's control and support of the Viet Cong insurgency is "the heartbeat of the war." Once again here, South Vietnam has requested our assistance and we have responded. The South Vietnamese, and we, want Hanoi to know that its attack on its neighbor must cease.

It is important to understand the nature of our operations in North Vietnam, and to contrast them with those of the communists against South Vietnam. There are too many who have recklessly applied the adjective "barbaric" in the wrong place.

Our aerial operations are carefully controlled as to area, target, and munitions. They are almost surgical, aiming to cut the lines of control and supply running from north to south, but carefully avoiding essentially civilian targets.

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Which is "barbaric," the bombing of an infiltration bridge, or the beheading of a mayor? Which is "barbaric," the strafing of a military convoy heading south, or the systematic murder of innocent villagers?

The only action we could not justify would be failing to help South Vietnam. Of this, we will not be guilty. In operations in the north and in the south -- and both are necessary -- we will continue to stand with the valiant Vietnamese, giving them whatever kind and measure of help is needed and appropriate.

And so, in sum, I say to all who question what we do:

In the face of all the evidence, what other course can honor take? Indeed, what other course is there in our own self-interest? How else can we sustain the faith of all the free lands in America's will to resist aggression and bring an end to the day of the assassin? How else can we face our own national conscience?

Our aim is peace. Peace for all men, and freedom for them to build their own futures. We stand in Vietnam -- and we will stay there -- to give its people a chance at this greater destiny.

We will leave when the terror halts and the killings cease. We will leave when the aggressor leaves, and not before. And on that day, we would turn with all the peoples of Southeast Asia -- yes, with South and North Vietnamese alike -- to the building of a free and more abundant future.

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